

We claim:

1. A media control system, comprising:
a computer connected to a data source to receive
periodic updates of schedule data relating to available
media content deliverable through a channel;
said computer being connected to control a delivery of
selected media content through said channel to a media
output device;
said computer being connected to a preference data
store storing preference data indicating media content
preferred by a user;
said computer being connected to a user interface with
a display and an input device;
said computer being programmed to select a subset of
said available media content responsively to said preference
data;
said computer being further programmed to display first
identifiers corresponding to said subset and accept first
input indicating a one of said first identifiers to be used
currently or in the future and to control a delivery of
media content responsively to said first input;
said computer being further programmed to display
second identifiers corresponding to said schedule data
and/or other media data corresponding to media items
substantially identical to said schedule data, and to accept
second input indicating multiple ones of said second
identifiers indicating preferences and to store data
responsive to said second input in said preference store
without controlling a delivery of the media content

29 corresponding to said second identifiers responsively
30 thereto.

1 2. A system as in claim 1, wherein said computer is
2 further programmed to store data responsive to said first
3 input in said preference store.

1 3. A system as in claim 1, wherein said second at least
2 some of said identifiers are derived from out-of-date
3 schedule data.

1 4. A system as in claim 1, wherein said multiple ones
2 are displayed simultaneously on said display.

1 5. A system as in claim 1, wherein said computer is
2 further programmed to display a list of categories of media
3 content and to accept input indicating ones of said
4 categories to exclude from said second identifiers, and to
5 exclude from said second identifiers accordingly.

1 6. A system as in claim 1, wherein said second
2 identifiers include video clips.

1 7. A system as in claim 1, wherein said second
2 identifiers include narrative descriptions

1 8. A media control system, comprising:

2 a computer connected to a data source to receive
3 periodic updates of schedule data relating to available
4 media content deliverable through a channel;

5 said computer being connected to control a delivery of
6 selected media content through said channel to a media
7 output device ;

8 said computer being connected to a preference data
9 store storing preference data indicating media content
10 preferred by a user;

11 said computer being connected to a user interface with
12 a display and an input device;

13 said computer being programmed to select a subset of
14 said available media content responsively to said preference
15 data;

16 said computer being further programmed to display first
17 identifiers corresponding to said subset and accept first
18 input indicating a one of said first identifiers to be used
19 currently or in the future and to control a delivery of
20 media content responsively to said first input;

21 said computer being further programmed to display
22 second identifiers corresponding to said schedule data
23 and/or other media data and to accept second input
24 indicating at least one of said second identifiers
25 indicating a preference and to store data responsive to said
26 second input in said preference store, said second
27 identifiers being derived from said schedule data and
28 filtered such that said second identifiers include
29 substantially no redundant entries, redundant entries being
30 entries that are characterized by content that is identical
31 according to at least one criterion other than a time of
32 availability for use.

1 9. A system as in claim 8, wherein said computer is
2 further programmed to display a list of categories of media
3 content and to accept input indicating ones of said
4 categories to exclude from said second identifiers, and to
5 exclude from said second identifiers accordingly.

1 10. A system as in claim 8, wherein said computer is
2 programmed to store said data responsive to said second
3 input without controlling a delivery of media content
4 responsively thereto.

1 11. A system as in claim 8, wherein said second
2 identifiers include video clips.

1 12. A system as in claim 8, wherein said second
2 identifiers include narrative descriptions.

1 13. A device for adding preference data to an EPG
2 system having a preference database with preference data
3 derived, at least in part, from program selections of a
4 user, comprising:

5 a controller with a program database containing program
6 identifiers identifying programs, at least some of whose
7 content is not currently, or scheduled to be, available for
8 use;

9 said controller being programmed to generate a user-
10 interface element that displays displayed identifiers
11 including at least a subset of said stored program
12 identifiers and accepts user input indicating multiple
13 selections from among said displayed identifiers, said
14 subset including at least one identifying content that is
15 not currently, or scheduled to be, available for use; and

16 a data control element that stores data responsive to
17 said multiple selections in said preference database.

1 14. A device as in claim 13, wherein said user input
2 indicating multiple selections indicates more than one
3 selection from a single instance of displaying through said
4 user-interface, whereby said user is able to select multiple
5 identifiers without changing a display of said user-
6 interface.

1 15. A device as in claim 13, wherein said EPG system
2 controls a media transmission channel responsively to said
3 preference data stored in said preference database.

1 16. A device as in claim 13, wherein said controller is
2 programmed to eliminate redundant program identifiers, where
3 said respective programs identified by said redundant
4 identifiers are distinguishable only by a time of broadcast.

1 17. A device as in claim 13, wherein said controller is
2 further programmed such that said multiple selections
3 indicate specific preferred uses of program material
4 including at least one of: recording, viewing, and
5 preventing an ability to view.

1 18. A media control device, comprising:

2 a controller connected to at least one data store
3 holding at least preference data and media content
4 identification data, said media content identification data
5 identifying media content available through a communications
6 channel;

7 said controller being connectable to said
8 communications channel to control delivery of said media
9 content through said communications channel;

10 a user interface including a display and an input
11 device;

12 said controller being programmed to select a first
13 portion of said identification data responsively to said
14 preference data, display said identification data first
15 portion, and accept a command through said input device to
16 use first media content from said identification data first
17 portion;

18 said controller being further programmed to control
19 said communications channel responsively to said command to
20 use;

21 said controller being further programmed to display a
22 second portion of said identification data and accept
23 commands through said input device to select second media
24 content from said second portion of identification data
25 without using said second media content; and

26 said controller being programmed to modify said
27 preference data responsively to both said commands to select
28 and said command to use.

1 19. A device as in claim 18, wherein said controller is
2 programmed such that said first portion of identification
3 data and said second portion identification data are each
4 displayed as lists of identifiers and the identifiers used
5 in the two lists are identical where they pertain to the
6 same media content.

1 20. A device as in claim 18, wherein said first portion
2 of identification data has multiple identifiers identifying
3 a same content and said second portion has only single
4 identifiers identifying said same content.

1 21. A device as in claim 18, wherein said controller is
2 programmed to accept commands to limit said second portion
3 identification data and to limit said second portion of
4 identification data accordingly.

1 22. A device as in claim 21, wherein:
2 said controller is programmed to display predefined
3 classes of media content;
4 said commands to limit include a command to emphasize
5 representation in said second portion of identification data
6 of identifiers corresponding to at least one of said
7 predefined classes of media content.

1 23. A device as in claim 22, wherein said commands to
2 limit including a command to omit representation in said
3 second portion of identification data identifiers
4 corresponding to at least one of said predefined classes of
5 media content.

1 24. A device as in claim 21, wherein:
2 said controller is programmed to display predefined
3 classes of media content;

4 said commands to limit include a command to omit
5 representation in said second portion of identification data
6 identifiers corresponding to at least one of said predefined
7 classes of media content.

1 25. A method of updating a preference database for an
2 electronic program guide, comprising the steps of:

3 generating a first list of programs currently available
4 for viewing, said step of generating a first list including
5 the step of permitting redundant entries when said entries
6 are distinguishable only by a time of broadcast;

7 at a time of viewing, displaying said first list of
8 programs, accepting commands to select at least one program
9 from said list, and controlling a media output device to
10 display said at least one program;

11 generating a second list of programs scheduled to be
12 available currently and in the future, said step of
13 generating a second list including the step of excluding
14 redundant entries when said redundant entries are
15 distinguishable only by time of broadcast;

16 at a time of programming, displaying said second list
17 of programs and accepting commands to select multiple
18 programs from said second list and storing said multiple
19 selections; and

20 modifying said preference database responsively to said
21 multiple selections.

1 26. A method as in claim 25, wherein said step of
2 generating a second list includes displaying a list of
3 program categories, accepting commands referencing said
4 program categories, and excluding programs scheduled to be
5 available currently and in the future responsively to said
6 commands referencing said program categories.

7 27. A method as in claim 25, wherein said step of
8 generating a second list includes generating a list of
9 programs that were scheduled to be available in the past.

1 28. A method as in claim 25, wherein said step of
2 generating a second list includes displaying a list of
3 program categories, accepting commands referencing said
4 program categories, and excluding programs scheduled to be
5 available currently and in the future responsively to said
6 commands referencing said program categories.

1 29. A method of updating a preference database used by
2 an electronic program guide to modify listings of currently
3 available programming, comprising the steps of:

4 displaying a list of program categories;
5 accepting commands referencing said program categories;
6 generating a list of programs scheduled to be available
7 currently and in the future and to have been available in
8 the past;

9 excluding from said list redundant entries when said
10 redundant entries are distinguishable only by time of
11 broadcast;

12 modifying said list responsively to said commands
13 referencing said program categories;

14 at a time of programming, displaying said second list
15 of programs and accepting commands to select multiple
16 programs from said second list and storing said multiple
17 selections; and

18 modifying said preference database responsively to said
19 multiple selections without controlling an output of any of
20 said programs identified in said multiple selections.

1 30. A method as in claim 29, wherein:

2 said step of accepting commands referencing said
3. program categories includes accepting a command to emphasize
4 programs in a selected category; and
5- said step of modifying said list includes increasing
6 representation in said list of programs in said selected
7 category.

1 31. A computer user interface for generating media
2 content selections to serve as examples of desired
3 selections for use in generating and refining user-
4 preference profiles stored in a database, the computer user-
5 interface comprising:

6 a controller with a display and an input connected to
7 receive program selection identifiers;

8 said controller being programmed to:

9 receive media content data from a data source;

10 display, on said display, content identifiers of
11 said media content responsive to said media content;

12 at a time of inputting, receive inputs from a user
13 indicating ones of said identifiers corresponding to content
14 the user prefers to use, said inputs not necessarily
15 indicating content said user will use, but content to serve
16 as an example for purposes of building a user-preference
17 profile; and

18 transmit said inputs to said database.